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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 5935

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ERDA, MNUC, TW, US
SUBJECT: REPORTS REPUBLIC OF CHINA REPROCESSING URANIUM FOR POSSIBLE MILITARY USE

REF: TAIPEI 5907

1. THERE FOLLOWS ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED CHINA POST AUGUST 30:

"ROC CAN PRODUCE A-WEAPONS MATERIAL

WASHINGTON, AUG. 29 (AP)

TAIWAN HAS BEEN SECRETLY REPROCESSING SPENT URANIUM FUEL, AN OPERATION THAT CAN PRODUCE ATOMIC WEAPONS MATERIAL, U.S. INTELLIGENCE REPORTS INDICATE, ACCORDING TO THE WASHINGTON POST.

IT IS UNCLEAR HOW LONG TAIWAN HAS BEEN CONDUCTING THE SECRET OPERATION OR HOW MUCH BOMB MATERIAL MAY HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, THE NEWSPAPER QUOTED UNNAMED U.S. OFFICIALS AS SAYING.

THE STORY IN THE POST'S SUNDAY EDITIONS SAID OFFICIALS OF THE ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT AGENCY AND THE ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE INTEL-
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DECLASSIFIED☑ RELEASABLE☑
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LIGENCE REPORTS.

"I CAN'T CONFIRM ANY OF IT", A SPOKESMAN FOR THE ARMS CONTROL AGENCY TOLD THE ASSOCIATED PRESS WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE STORY. AN ERDA SPOKESMAN DECLINED COMMENT.

THE POST SAID OFFICIALS OF THE TWO GOVERNMENT AGENCIES EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT TAIWAN HAS AMASSED ENOUGH MATERIAL TO MAKE AN ATOMIC BOMB.

"THE UNITED STATES IS SAID TO BE FEARFUL OF REVEALING THE SOURCE OF ITS INTELLIGENCE, PARTICULARLY WHILE STILL SEEKING TO LEARN THE FULL EXTENT OF THE SECRET WORK", THE NEWSPAPER SAID.

IT SAID ACDA OFFICIALS REPORT THEY HAVE BEEN STALLING ON AN APPLICATION TO EXPORT TWO ADDITIONAL NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS TO TAIWAN, IN HOPES TAIWAN WILL SEE IT AS A SIGNAL TO STOP SECRET REPROCESSING.

FOUR LARGE U.S. NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS WERE APPROVED FOR EXPORT IN 1972 AND 1974 AS PART OF A TAIWAN PROGRAM DESIGNED TO PROVIDE HALF THE ISLAND'S ELECTRICITY NEEDS FROM NUCLEAR SOURCES IN 1985."

2. CHINA POST OF AUGUST 30 ALSO CARRIED ARTICLE IN WHICH TING MAO-SHIH, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION OFFICE, DENIED THAT ROC HAS BEEN SECRETLY REPROCESSING SPENT URANIUM FUEL. THAT ARTICLE READS AS FOLLOWS:

"ROC DENIED PROCESSING SPENT URANIUM FUEL

TAIPEI, AUG. 29 (AP)

A CHINESE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN DENIED SUNDAY THAT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA HAS BEEN SECRETLY PROCESSING SPENT URANIUM FUEL.

THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IS TO USE NUCLEAR POWER ONLY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES, TING MAO-SHIH, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION OFFICE, SAID.

HE SAID PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO STATED PUBLICLY EARLY THIS YEAR THAT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA WILL NEVER DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS TO FIGHT AGAINST THE CHINESE ON THE MAINLAND.

THE WASHINGTON POST REPORTED IN ITS SUNDAY EDITION THAT THE ROC HAS BEEN SECRETLY CONDUCTING AN OPERATION THAT CAN PRODUCE ATOMIC WEAPONS MATERIAL.

TING SAID ROC'S ONLY NUCLEAR PROJECTS ARE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THREE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY TO THE ISLAND.

TWO ARE AT THE NORTHERN TIP OF TAIWAN AND ONE IS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE ISLAND. THEY ARE TO SUPPLY HALF OF TAIWAN'S ELECTRICITY NEEDS WHEN COMPLETED IN 1985."

3. NEITHER OF ABOVE ARTICLES HAS APPEARED IN CHINESE LANGUAGE PRESS.

4. COMMENT: EMBASSY PROPOSES TO LIMIT RESPONSE TO LOCAL PRESS QUERIES, IF ANY (NONE RECEIVED TO DATE) TO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT WE HAVE SEEN LOCALLY REPORTED NEWS ITEMS, INCLUDING ROC/GIO STATEMENT, AND THAT WE ARE UNABLE TO SHED ANY LIGHT ON STORY THAT HAS APPEARED IN PRESS. FURTHER, WE SHALL SUGGEST THAT IN LIGHT OF PRESS REFERENCES TO WASHINGTON SOURCES, THAT FURTHER INQUIRIES BE DIRECTED THERE.
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